

## United States Vital Statistics, 1951-1952

A new high for births and a continuing low level for deaths appear very likely for 1952 (table 1). Thus the natural increase in the population of the United States—that is, births minus deaths—should be greater than for any previous year. Marriages in 1952 continued to drop from the all-time high reached in 1946. On the basis of data from 19 States, divorces, which have also dropped off since their 1946 peak, appear to be rising slightly in 1952. These statements are based on provisional figures for States shown in the *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* for January-September 1952. Each month the figures are sent by State and local officials to the National Office of Vital Statistics.

### Deaths

Mortality statistics for the United States show that for the last 4 years, 1948-51, less than 10 people out of every 1,000 died during the year. For the first 9 months of 1952 the death rate was 9.6 deaths per 1,000 population, indicating that 1952 is likely to rank along with 1950 in having the lowest death rate on record.

For the past 15 years, 1937-51, the infant mortality rate (deaths under 1 year of age per

1,000 live births adjusted for changing numbers of births) for each year has been lower than that for the preceding year. For the period January-September 1952, the infant mortality rate was 28.3, so that 1952 may prove to be no exception to this trend of ever lower annual rates.

The summer of 1952 was noteworthy for long spells of record-breaking hot days in many parts of the country. That the heat wave had some effect on mortality is evident in two of the accompanying charts. Generally, in its seasonal variation the death rate decreases from May to June. Last year the death rate swung upward from 9.4 deaths per 1,000 population for May to 9.8 for June, the highest rate for June since 1944. The infant mortality rate rose from 28.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births for May to 30.2 for June, contrary to its usual downward seasonal swing. Unusual increases were noted in the death rates for diseases of the cardiovascular system, for accidents, for homicide, and for some gastrointestinal diseases.

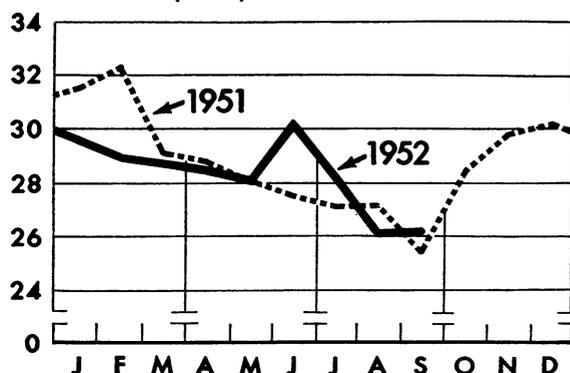
Table 2 gives the estimated death rates for selected causes in the United States during the first 9 months of 1951 and of 1952. The relative timeliness of information on causes of death is made possible through the cooperation of the States in sampling their death records monthly. The State vital statistics offices send to the national office every tenth death certificate, which

---

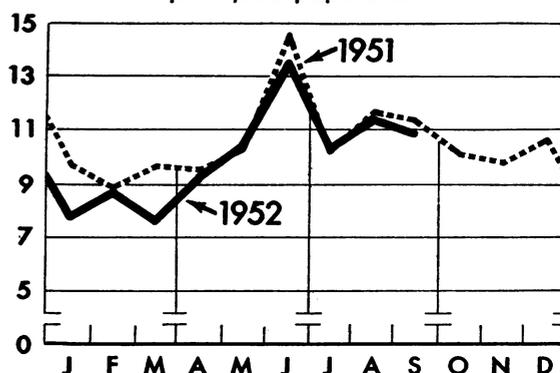
*Prepared by the National Office of Vital Statistics, Public Health Service.*

---

## Infant mortality per 1,000 live births



## Marriage licenses per 1,000 population



is processed immediately. However, this early information is less accurate than the complete data that will be available when all the death certificates are received. A discussion of the amount of error to be expected as a result of sampling variation is presented in the *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*.

### Births

In 1951 and the first 9 months of 1952 the number of births exceeded records set in 1947. For January–September it is estimated that 2,856,000 births were registered in 1952 as compared with 2,811,000 in 1951 (table 1). The number recorded during all of 1951 (3,758,000) was in turn almost 2 percent above the 1947 figure of 3,699,940 (final). In the years between these high points, the annual number of registered births held consistently at 3½ million.

The total number of births is slightly larger than the number registered because of the failure to register some births. It is estimated that 3,833,000 children were born in 1951 as compared with 3,817,000 in 1947.

The crude birth rate serves to indicate what proportion births bear to the current population of all ages. In a period of rapidly increasing population, as at present, this proportion may decline despite a rise in the number of births. Thus, the crude birth rate based on registered births was 24.5 per 1,000 population in 1951 and 25.8 in 1947. Between 1950 and 1951, a period in which the number of births rose sharply, the rate also increased (from 23.5 to 24.5). The slightly higher number of births in the first 9 months of 1952 as compared with 1951 caused no change in the birth rate, which was 24.6 for both periods.

Table 1. Vital statistics: United States, January–September, 1951 and 1952

	Number			Rate		
	1952	1951	Percent change	1952	1951	Percent change
Live births:						
Registered.....	2, 856, 000	2, 811, 000	+1. 6	24. 6	24. 6	0
Corrected for under-registration.....	2, 905, 000	2, 867, 000	+1. 3	25. 0	25. 1	-0. 4
Marriage licenses.....	1, 161, 840	1, 223, 951	-5. 1	10. 0	10. 7	-6. 5
Deaths.....	1, 114, 000	1, 106, 000	+0. 7	9. 6	9. 7	-1. 0
Infant deaths.....	80, 500	79, 400	+1. 4	28. 3	28. 6	-1. 0

NOTE: Deaths exclusive of fetal deaths and of deaths among armed forces overseas. Birth, death, and infant death data estimated. Birth, death, and marriage license rates per 1,000 population excluding armed forces overseas; infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births and adjusted for changing numbers of births. All rates on an annual basis. Population estimates prepared by the Bureau of the Census.

The recent upsurge in births began early in 1951 with peak increases over 1950 occurring in the months March through June. In the latter half of 1951, the birth rate each month exceeded that for the corresponding month of 1950, but by a smaller margin. The chart com-

**Table 2. Estimated death rates for selected causes of death: United States, January-September, 1951 and 1952**

[Exclusive of fetal deaths and of deaths among armed forces overseas; rates on an annual basis per 100,000 estimated population, excluding armed forces overseas]

Cause of death	Death rate, January- September	
	1952	1951
All causes.....	958.9	966.6
Tuberculosis, all forms.....	17.3	20.3
Syphilis and its sequelae.....	3.7	4.6
Dysentery, all forms.....	.6	.7
Diphtheria.....	.1	.2
Whooping cough.....	.3	.7
Meningococcal infections.....	1.0	.7
Acute poliomyelitis.....	1.9	.7
Measles.....	.4	.7
All other infective and parasitic diseases.....	3.3	2.9
Malignant neoplasms, etc. (principally cancer).....	142.7	141.6
Diabetes mellitus.....	16.2	16.4
Major cardiovascular-renal diseases.....	507.5	511.7
Diseases of cardiovascular system.....	493.8	496.3
Vascular lesions of central nervous system.....	108.5	104.6
Rheumatic fever.....	1.0	1.1
Diseases of heart.....	350.6	355.5
Hypertension without mention of heart and general arteriosclerosis.....	28.3	30.2
Other diseases of circulatory system.....	5.4	4.8
Chronic nephritis, etc.....	13.7	15.4
Influenza and pneumonia, etc.....	31.3	32.7
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum.....	5.6	5.4
Gastritis, duodenitis, enteritis, etc.....	5.4	5.1
Cirrhosis of liver.....	9.8	10.0
Acute nephritis, etc.....	1.8	2.1
Complications of pregnancy, etc.....	1.6	1.8
Congenital malformations.....	12.1	11.8
Senility, etc., and ill-defined conditions.....	15.2	16.7
Motor-vehicle accidents.....	22.2	21.1
All other accidents.....	38.9	38.9
Suicide.....	10.0	10.5
Homicide.....	4.8	4.5
All other causes.....	105.0	104.5

NOTE: Figures are based on a 10-percent sample of death certificates. The sampling error varies with the size of the death rate. For example, the estimate for diseases of heart is subject to an error of 0.5 percent, and for syphilis, 4 percent. Diphtheria, with a rate of only 0.2, is subject to an error of 22 percent.

paring monthly rates for 1951 and 1952 through September indicates that the main increases in 1952 occurred in July through September.

Part of the over-all increase in births in 1951 and 1952 was undoubtedly due to greater numbers of first-order births resulting from the sharp rise in marriages soon after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. However, it is likely that increased numbers of higher-order births in these years also contributed to the gain.

### Marriages

Monthly marriage license rates for the United States in 1951 and in 1952 through September (fourth chart) reveal a fairly similar seasonal pattern. Fewer marriage licenses are issued during the winter months than in the spring and summer, and June is the most popular month for obtaining marriage licenses.

In the past, marriage licenses have been responsive to such factors as the demobilization following the last war, the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, and the varying dates of Easter. The low birth rates during the business depression of the early 1930's, with the consequent reduction in numbers of young persons reaching marrying age during the current period, are now adversely affecting the number of marriages.

Because marriages by month on a current basis are not obtainable for the United States, the National Office of Vital Statistics publishes data on marriage licenses, rather than marriages, for most States. On an annual basis, the number of marriages is 1 to 3 percent less than the number of marriage licenses. Monthly figures on marriage licenses start with data for 1944, and annual figures on marriages go back to 1867.

Figures on marriage licenses for city areas that have populations of 100,000 or more are available by month starting with 1939.

### Divorces

Current monthly figures on divorces for 19 States are published in the *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*. A somewhat larger group of States will be represented in the 1953 issues of this report. Annual estimates on divorces in the United States are available from 1867 through 1951.